

DRAMATIC

DUOLOGUES

Four Short Plays in Verse

BY

EDGAR LEE MASTERS



SAMUEL FRENCH

New York

Los Angeles

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DRAMATIC DUOLOGUES

RICHMOND

A Dramatic Poem

BY

EDGAR LEE MASTERS

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HENRY VIII AND ANN BOLEYN

HENRY VIII AND ANN BOLEYN

The scene is an ante-chamber in the palace. HENRY is seated so that the full, red seriousness of his gross and powerful face fronts the audience. His hands are upon his knees which he occasionally pats while meditating. He is mumbling to himself, moving his lips as he does so. ANN enters in anxiety, almost terror, and nearly ready to give away to tears. HENRY does not turn his head or notice her.

ANN

Sir!

(He does not answer her. She comes closer, and around where she is in front of him. He turns a cold and brutal eye upon her.)

So it has come to this? To this!

That you who were my loyal, most assured
Servant; who craved forgiveness at my hands,
And absolution for the trivial faults
Of a lover, now these many nights desert
Your couch with me, and heap your disregard
For which you ask no pardon!

HENRY (*A grunt*) Ugh!

ANN

This is the course of love from world's beginning:
First eyes that cannot feed enough on us
Who have red lips, bright eyes, and delicate waists;
Then sighs and notes, and longings of smoke and fire;
Then raging which breaks down all obstacles,
And in the terror'd hour of consummation
Oaths, promises. But when the deed is done,

And the frail citadel of flesh is taken,
Then does the man despise himself who assaulted
The fort so often with such ill success,
Seeing how fragile were its walls the while;
Yea, and what little treasure has been gained,
So estimated after it is won!

HENRY

I came

To this retirement for prayer and meditation.

ANN

Shall I withdraw and leave you to the same?

HENRY (*After a silence*)

Having disturbed me it were perhaps as well
For you to stay. I have somewhat to tell you.

ANN

I am your true and humble wife, the mother
Of our Elizabeth, whom you care not for,
Not even in her sweet infancy, and despite
All prophecies of her greatness to be in time,
And England's world supremacy under her.

HENRY

She will become a woman if she lives.
England needs kings! And I, who put away
Catherine, my sometime queen, for thinking
God cursed my marriage with her with the births
Of female issue, and no male; and I
Who lifted you from lowliness, and at a word
Can sink you further than I raised you up,
And who through six years burned my heart away,
And my great vigor spent in wasted breath,
See now no heir but this Elizabeth—
And as to her—

ANN

What? What may the dread import

Of such stayed language be? (*He does not answer her.*)
Sir, what is this?

HENRY

You know right well that I have striven to have
All England wed you, as myself have done,
And take you to its heart, as I did.

ANN

Yes.

HENRY

But from our marriage day when London turned
Cold eyes upon the coronation feasts,
And voiced but feeble cheers as you passed down
To Westminster between those banks of velvet
And glinting gold, from then to now, a power,
As it were of witchcraft, or a nightmare holds
Prosperity back upon me, and this union.
What is it saving witchcraft? Or is it heaven,
Which gives me my deserts, who put away
My sometime queen, the loyal Catherine
For you, who stirred my lust, and gave that lust
Powers of deception over me, till I thought
That I had sinned marrying my Catherine,
My brother's wife; and that she bore no males,
And oftentimes miscarried because my sin
Found punishment from heaven? False augury
Of that May morning of your coronation!
Pure light of an English sky, and tender sun,
The air so fragrant, that they should conceal
By very loveliness such days as these!
My people will not have you: that is all!
They would not take you at the first, nor have
They opened hearts to you along the way;
And now those hearts are locked besides, and I
Have no key to unlock them with.

ANN

Is this

The subject of your meditation here?

HENRY

Yes! Why that question?

ANN

Because you never would
Have given yourself to such in those brave days
When you were off at hunting, and wrote me notes
Desiring me, and full of mad regrets
That we were not together, calling me love,
And your own absence torment; and heaping blessing
Upon my kindness, beauty as you called them;
And praying for freedom so to marry me;
And begging me to give myself to you
Before our marriage; and for sweet postscripts drawing
A figure of your heart, wherein you put
My name's initials.

HENRY

No more of this, I say!
Have you no gratitude? Do you forget
Your ancestry who dealt in wool and silk?
Have I not lifted up your family,
Making your father Earl of Wiltshire and
Of Ormond too?

ANN

Sir, I keep thanks for that.

HENRY

Was I not orbited with Catherine,
Whereby both France and Spain were quieted,
The Vatican my friend, and Luther leashed,
My people grown and growing to regard
This state, this England, after many wars,
Set in its goodly course, to move forever

Toward power and toward prosperity? Yes, and look
Where I am come to, and for what? Your eyes!
Which seemed to pierce through Wolsey's knavery,
And double dealing, and made me turn on him.
Look at me now, which your most slender neck,
Just human flesh and nothing else, which led me
For the loyalty of kisses and what they entail
To send Sir Thomas More to unjust death,
Wherewith the king of France has taunted me
That he would rather have lost a dukedom than
A man like this. All this is consequence
Direct or indirect of this my madness
For lips so poppy red! And I remember,
Sitting here now and thinking of all things
How in the week that Thomas More resigned
I paid the money that you lost at bowls;
And bought those thirty ells of golden arras
In Flanders for your nightgown, yes and satin,
And black velute. Yes, and I spent my moneys
For orange pies, for quinces and strawberries,
For greyhounds and white falcons, everything
To give you delectation.

ANN

Sir, wherein

Have I shown lack of thanks, and love for these?

HENRY

Thanks! Love! What is such payment for such riches,
Which are as nothing compared to what I've given
In time, in mind, in peace, in loss of power,
In dislocation of my sovereignty,
In disrepute with my own people, in quarrels
Brewed and yet brewing over Europe!

ANN

Sir,

It may be so. But once there was a time

When for my love no loss was held too great,
No pain too troublesome. My tragedy
Is that you did not see and fully count
The little I had to give for such rich favors
Which you have showered on me; that all I had,
Or could have afterward was my thanks and love,
And this my body which you prized at first,
But prize no more; nay, not if all these evils
Which you hold consequent upon your love,
Had not ensued, you would be still thus changed,
And with your satisfactions, looking with dulled
Indifferent eyes upon these poppy lips,
As you were wont to call them; and on this neck,
Whose ivory slenderness once stirred your blood
To passionate kisses, and importunities
For more, and more, for which you have no wonder
Now but looks dulled by familiarity,
Saying, That is your neck, and what of that?

HENRY

Perhaps I am unseminared.

ANN

So you imply
That I have said so? Never, on my troth,
Upon my honor, and my hope of heaven
I never said it. Ah, the evil lies
Sown between us are sprouting on our path!

HENRY

Lies! Be they such? Well, what brings down the curse
That I cannot detect the lies, and sort
The truth from lies? Whence is that ultimate
Of punishment, that I like Herod here,
Whom worms devoured, must sit and have these lies
Drop round me, crawl upon me, and multiply
Faster than I can brush them off? What's this?

ANN

Sir, go ahunting, get the country air,
Fly this mephitic breath that fills a court,
And come back to me, cleared of such conceits
As breed here.

HENRY

In my absence you will dance;
By which I'm minded that I did not speak
Of Mark Smeaton I paid for dancing lessons
In that same week that Thomas More resigned;
That was the first. And ever since you dance.

ANN

There was a time when all such gaities
Gave you quick happiness for my sprightly youth.
Now I have scarcely power to please you. Well,
Here am I still your loyal wife and queen.

HENRY

Is it so?

ANN

May I die if it be not so.
Sir, I implore you deal not in indirection,
But if you have good cause of any complaint
Against me, speak; and say now what you meant
A moment since, when you said "as to her,"
Referring to our child Elizabeth,
Then stopped with pregnant silence. You well know
That we were wed in May, and that September
Following saw her birth, which coming to pass
So quickly from our wedding rites is proof
How your hot importunities had sway,
And overcame my virginal reluctance.

HENRY

Virginal!

ANN

So doubt has taken you?
It is my fitting punishment, perhaps,
Who yielded, and accepted of a room
Where you could come, and that while still your queen
Possessed you legally. But as for you,
You do yourself great injury, who throw doubt
Even by looks, or shrugs, or zephyr words
Upon your child Elizabeth. Sir, her strength,
Her infant brilliancy of mind is proof
That she was got in love, though the crude law
Had not yet sanctioned her. And can you think,
Has gossip, poisoned breath so conquered you,
That you can think I could receive your courtship
Both day and night, with every minute filled
With some attention from you, received by me
With loving thanks, so easy to be read,
And read too, as you read within my eyes
The love I gave you from a passionate heart—
Sir, can you think all this could be, and I
Have time for other love, or disposition
To love another? Sir, no woman does so,
No woman ever did, who was entitled
To bear the name of woman. And such suspicion
Ranks me with whores. Who dares to call me that?

HENRY

I dare, my lady.

ANN

May I then credit gossip
That you have called me witch and whore as well?

HENRY

Yes, that you may.

ANN

Well, sir, that bad confession

Enables me to tell you what it is
Which has so clouded up your mind that truth
Cannot be sorted from the lies.

HENRY

Yea, tell me.

ANN

Plainly you judge all others by yourself.

HENRY

Those words are treason!

ANN

Even so, they're truth.

HENRY

I am not in a mind to let you toy
With this our kingly dignity as of yore.

ANN

If it be so, the time has come to deal
In plainest words, and take the consequence.
What can life be, enduring with this mood
Now grown habitual with you, and submitting
To words like whore and witch? Sir, is it death
Or banishment that will be penalties
For rising up from slavish cowardice,
And like a woman of good blood repelling
Such words, and the strange hate that utters *them*?
Kings, too, are born as other mortals are;
And when they draw their blood from yeoman veins
They may have greater strength. Sir, Agamemnon
Was a farmer king. And I whose forbears dealt
As merchants in silk and wool, take pride therein,
Seeing our child Elizabeth with such blood,
So uncorrupted, and so fresh and strong
Course through her, yes, and yours, which spite of this
Your aberration and your melancholy
Is rich with life. Know you what is to be?

Shall she be queen, and for a long great reign
Make this our England as precious as ancient Greece?
So is it prophesied. How can we tell?
If it be so, remember, sir, the page
Of history will record you married me;
It will record I bore her; and this gossip
About my loves will letter in the page
As merest foot notes, to win but smiling stares
That you could be so minded as you are.

HENRY

This is enough! You may withdraw from us! (*She starts to go.*)
One other word. What did you mean by saying
That what affects us is that I judge others
By myself?

ANN

Sir, it is well to tell you:
As you came to me in secret while you owed
Fidelity to your wife Queen Catherine,
That dereliction has poisoned you to think
I would deceive you.

HENRY

As you deceived the Queen!
You were our fit accomplice, remember that.

ANN

Yes, and am punished for it by your suspicion.
You loved me, wooed me, wooed me for long years
With ardor, with no pause. You are a king,
I was, I am your subject, without right
To disobey you, or to brook your will.
I have no other shelter for my soul
Than such excuses. Yet we both are under
The rule of heaven, whose great sovereignty
Rules even kings.

HENRY

Yea, as of old you tangle
My thinking with your words. What do I think?
One moment! Yes, you have not told me all,
Somewhat remains in that fine subtlety
Which is your mind. You have not told me all!
What say you now?

ANN

Nothing! By your grace
I'll go and take my child Elizabeth
Out to the garden.

HENRY

No, a moment yet.
I have it now. Lady Jane Grey is what
I had in mind.

ANN

And you have much in heart.

HENRY

So you have said before. What else my lady?

ANN

Why I have said, and you know it is truth,
That while I lay abed bearing our child,
You did make love to maids about this court,
Which as I said, I never said that you
Had grown unseminared, as you are not.

HENRY

But Lady Grey!

ANN

Sir, do you tell me you have never stolen
To Lady Grey behind my back?

HENRY

That's it,
That's what preoccupies you. We are glad

Your secret wound, as you regard it, stands
Revealed at last. And so we reach the point;
Attend now, and consider how our patience,
And love are ended.

ANN

May some other time
Be opportune for this? I'm weary, sir.

HENRY

No other time—but now! Stand where you are,
Sit not till I have finished! There'll be time
For you to rest between what I shall say,
And what you shall then do—or—

ANN

Sir, already,
I read disaster in your gathering brows.

HENRY

Knowing how I have come to read your heart.
Well, now attend: I've paid Mark Smeaton's bills
For teaching dancing to you—let it go.
You are descended from the merchant folk,
And Mark from artisans. He came penniless
To court here, and I liked him for his gift
Of music, for his dancing, elegance.
We showered our gifts upon him, so did you,
You'll not deny that?

ANN

All was known to you
That ever I gave him.

HENRY

Is it so? Well, now
All is known to us. Our Lord Chamberlain,
Cromwell, the Earl of Essex serves us well,
And has established us in power. 'Twas he

Who cleared the way for us to marry you,
For which we do forgive him. He brought down
Such men as More and Fisher, Courtenay,
So that with lesser persons he but plays
To do our will.

ANN

He, too, may fall for treason.

HENRY

Why do you say so? He will never fall
While he keeps his allegiance. But no matter!
He has great skill in questioning Lutherans,
Monks, traitors, papists, Briggittines and debtors,
And all such marplots in our realm. And so
The other day he sent an invitation
To this Mark Smeaton. Would he come to dine?
The dancing master came all blithe of heart.
The honor was so signal. Now you stare!

ANN

Sir, your mood is crushing me.

HENRY

Be patient yet.

The dancing master shown into a room
Found himself facing Cromwell at the table;
Just then two men came up behind him soundless
And stood behind him, Smeaton, you observe.
Why do you clap your hands to hide your face?
Take them away, and look at me! Now listen:
Smeaton was like a rabbit before the hound
Facing the mighty Cromwell. So began
A colloquy as thus: Question by Cromwell:
Where did you get that ring? Who gave it you?
Know you the cost thereof? About that doublet,
Where did you get it? Smeaton answered nothing.
He looked in terror. Just then these two men

Who stood behind him, seeing he did not answer
These questions of our Chamberlain, put a rope
Around his neck, and with a twisting stick
Tightened it, as the hangman does, you know.
For truth he shall be hanged, 'od's body shall he
Be drawn and quartered, hanged! List to some more,
For other questions followed fast, as thus:
Have you had Ann Boleyn?

ANN

I cry for mercy!

HENRY

Mercy? Seek God, who is all merciful,
Not me his instrument in justest judgment.

ANN

Sir, let me go now.

HENRY

Nay, but you may sit. (*She sinks into a chair.*)
Yea, so he asked this dancing master more,
This perfumed dandy whom I fed and honored;
Have you had Ann Boleyn, they call the Queen?
You have? How many times? A dozen say you?
Was she good sport? She cried out, do you say?
Where was the king? At hunting? So? So she laughed?
Laughed at her cunning never to be found out?

ANN

O, devil hatched, incredible lies!

HENRY

Thou witch, thou ruin of me to this hour!
Thou whore, who whored with me ere my divorce,
Hear now as I make end: The dancing master
Broke down at last, confessed his villainy,
Told how we were made shameful, we the king,

Were made a cuckold, while we lived in trust,
In fond belief of a chaste, faithful queen.
O monstrous villainy! O perfidy!
For all the while he had you secretly,
And tupp'd you in our absence, laughing out
At us deceived, and made a gazing-stock.

ANN

O, blessed Son of Mary bless my king
To see the truth! Upon my knees I swear
There is no truth in this, no slightest truth. (*He spurns her.*)

HENRY

Say what you have to say as you lay down
That slender neck upon the block. The sun
A week hence shall not look on thee.

ANN (*Fingering her neck*)

Not much to cut. Would, sir, you had as little
To sever for the solving of your fate.

HENRY

Be off!

ANN

One word! Our child Elizabeth! Do with me
As seemeth best to you, but guard our child.

HENRY

Be off with you! Already at the door
The guards are waiting to take you to the Tower.
Be off!

(*She staggers toward him imploringly. He waves her away brutally. She staggers back.*)

ANN

Pray God to clear your mind. (*She reels out.*)

HENRY (*Mumbling to himself*)

Jane Grey shall be my wife a fortnight hence,
And I shall father a king to be. What ho!
Cromwell, come hither! I would consult with thee!

THE CURTAIN

ANDREW JACKSON AND PEGGY EATON

ANDREW JACKSON AND PEGGY EATON

The scene is a room of the Executive Mansion at Washington. PRESIDENT JACKSON is standing in an attitude of anxiety, holding a glass of brandy. PEGGY EATON is sitting relaxed in a chair, just coming out of a fainting spell. She lifts up her head finally and looks about her.

PEGGY

Oh, I'm here? Well—

JACKSON

Here's some brandy.

(She takes the glass from JACKSON and sips.)

PEGGY

Is he gone? Is Rev. Campbell gone?

JACKSON

He's gone. Drink more! *(She does so.)*

PEGGY

Did I fall?

JACKSON

No, you didn't fall.

PEGGY

I can't remember somehow.

JACKSON

Well, when you told your story full and true,
And I said to the Rev. Campbell, what,
What say you sir to that, his smug reply
Was, Nothing!

PEGGY

I remember.

JACKSON

By the Eternal Nothing! I turned loose
 And flayed him then. I said, Well, Rev. Campbell
 You could eat this nothing were I judge advocate;
 The firing squad turns men to God. They speak,
 Confess and weep before the leveled guns.
 Do you remember that? (*He takes a drink.*)

PEGGY

Vaguely, a bit.

My brain was whirling then.

JACKSON

You don't recall

What he said in reply?

PEGGY

No, not a word.

JACKSON

Why, this: he said you could not change me, no
 Neither with guns nor flames. I said get out,
 Get out of here!

PEGGY

I must have fainted then.

JACKSON

About then maybe. I was intent on him,
 And didn't see you. For his parting shot
 Roused all the fury in me.

PEGGY

What was that?

JACKSON

He brought up that old military scandal
 Concerning Florida in my soldier days,

And flung at me that Arbuthnot whom I hanged
For treason to America.

PEGGY

What? So bold?

JACKSON

Yes at that door, as he was going out
He flung this taunt at me, this lying curse:
The blood of Arbuthnot be on your hands.
Drink more, dear Peggy.
I'll hang Calhoun for this. Why, so help me God,
God damn them all! The blood of Arbuthnot!
Calhoun made up those words for him. Hell's fire,
Hell's devils, hell's delight! Calhoun! O, scoundrell!
Liar, two-faced! the blood of Arbuthnot!
Calhoun be president? No, never, God damn him!

PEGGY

I'm glad I didn't fall, I'm better.

JACKSON

No, you didn't fall.

PEGGY

Ah, think,
He's gone. Just think, he's taken victory. Gone
Triumphant, silent, hard, untouched, unyielding,
Unruffled, insolent, unsubdued, gone, gone!

JACKSON

Yes, gone to Albany. This lie has cost him
His pastorate. I've broken him. He's gone.

PEGGY

To spread this plague in Albany. No, he's gone
Cuddling the lie we tried to kill. Oh me!
Living and safe! He stood his ground, unflinching
Before me, you, the president. He's gone
To say he fought us down, to tell as well

This lie of Dr. Craven. We are beaten.
The wound is deeper now. This final cure
Has failed, and we are sick, indeed, from now.

JACKSON

The blood of Arbuthnot be on your hands—
Meek, dough-faced sneak, designing rattlesnake.
I should have throttled him. Neglecting that
Regret will gnaw me always to my last day.
Are you better now?

PEGGY

Yes, General!

I fainted, but for that I would have said
What would be throwing children to a dragon.
That stony-hearted sanctity who draws
From the blood books of the Jews his piety
Would have taken smirking from my innocence
What I was willed to say as its final proof,
And turned its bread to stones, wherewith to kill
My fame, not feed my virtuous womanhood.
Thank God!

JACKSON

What's in your mind?

PEGGY

That which we know, my husband and myself:
I told him long ago. I sought occasion
When I might tell you, General. It was now.
I meant to win this minister with my heart
Turned out, with all its secrets spilled.

JACKSON

What is it? I'm your friend, dear. As you will.

PEGGY

Yes, I'll unburden my last confidence.
Women are wont, and everyone knows this,
Women, I mean in trouble, or who shudder

From poverty, to arrest child-bearing, even
To end life that's begun. The day must come
When law will sanction this. I purposed here
To win this minister by full frankness, saying
That Craven spoke part truth.

JACKSON

More scoundrel hel

PEGGY

That carriage fall had injured me.

JACKSON

Campbell says

That Dr. Craven said so.

PEGGY

Believe me, I was injured.

Well, Dr. Craven said the child might die,
Or I in consequence. Look, there was I
A wife whose husband was afar at sea,
In poverty, with two children to support,
And should this child be born to such a house?
All things considered, I said take the child.
Its life was but two months. And Timberlake
Was then but gone two months. It was his child,
Or may God kill me now. It was his child
Begotten on the night before he sailed.
A woman knows when the miraculous happens.

JACKSON

Well, well, well. I'll crush the deadly head
Of this snake lie against your womanhood.
By God, I'll crush it, as I crushed the Bank.
And, Peg, when I have smeared the Calhoun blood
On the streets of Charleston, when all my cabinet,
These clerks, heads of departments, nothing more,
Walk jobless in the streets, and all their wives
Are shamed for lack of bread, you will be here,

Still here, by God, still here with John, your husband,
Prospered with honor at my counsel table.

PEGGY

Generall

JACKSON

Peg, no tears.

PEGGY

Oh, please forgive me.

My brain is clearing, but I can't remember.

General, did I say to Rev. Campbell,

What I have told you now?

JACKSON

No, Peg, not that.

You told the Rev. Campbell of Timberlake.

PEGGY

Yes.

JACKSON

About his messed accounts, his sailing off;

About his death at Port Mahon; about

Your widowhood of a year; also about

The accident you had. You even hinted

That a miscarriage was the bad result.

PEGGY

Yes.

JACKSON

Not that you took the case in hand because

Of poverty. And if you had the inference

Was naturally that Dr. Craven sided

With you in that necessity. But whether

You had or had no right to such relief

This Dr. Craven was a loathsome villain

To tell such secrets of the sick, and give

The Rev. Campbell pabulum to chew

With his calumnious jaws. All is as clear
 As daylight to an honest mind: This child
 Was Timberlake's. And Timberlake was dead
 Almost a year when you wed Major Eaton.
 And I—the Rev. Campbell has been choked
 With my oath here—it was myself who urged
 Your marriage to John Eaton to shut up
 This gossip started by this Dr. Craven.
 I'll take the responsibility! Can't they see
 I'll take the responsibility for everything
 That I have done, or caused my friends to do?
 John Eaton shall be secretary of war
 When others walk the streets, as I have said;
 And no high moralists, like Rev. Campbell,
 Shall change me, no, nor bring my office down
 Who take a stand against you with this lie.
 He's gone, you say? Well, let him go. We stay!
 And we will stay! We'll stay and crush this lie,
 As I have crushed the Bank, as I am crushing
 This very hour the hopes of John Calhoun.
 Now do not grieve. Dry up your tears. (*He takes a drink.*)

PEGGY

Oh, General,

That self-sufficient, calm, obdurate preacher
 Has taken all my courage. He'll go on
 Sowing these slanders, now that he has faced
 Such strength as yours, and has not broken down.
 He'll go on.

JACKSON

Let him go till he gets tired.

PEGGY

Yes, but my husband thinks and knits his brows!
 His place here in your cabinet is invidious.
 The talk goes on! And your most generous honors
 Heaped on us, somehow are as gilded benches

Which show the rough wood of our misery.
I know, too, that your niece, the land's first lady,
Abhors me, and that you are much embarrassed
By her repugnance to my calls, or when
You do me honor at these dinners of state.

JACKSON

We had some words today.

PEGGY

Why, what about?

JACKSON

About the presidential dinner to be soon.
She had the chance to head the table.

PEGGY

And wouldn't?

JACKSON

And wouldn't. So she's off to Tennessee.

PEGGY

Just think what trouble I am causing you.

JACKSON

Just think what trouble they are causing me,
Herself included! Why, I'd have to say
That I was wrong, and you were in the wrong,
To say that you were cause of any trouble.
No, by the Eternal, let her sulk and go.
Right is right, and you are in the right,
And I am in the right. She could have entered
Upon my arm, and graced the table's head.
She wouldn't. As it is I'll walk alone
Into the dining room. And you shall enter
Upon the arm of Sir Charles Vaughn, your friend,
The British have their virtues, after all.
I like this man, this British Minister,
Because he has a mind, and is your friend,

And likes your husband, John, whom I support,
 And will not cease to stand by to the end.
 The wolves are after us, it may be. Well,
 I'll not appease them throwing from the sleigh
 John Eaton or yourself. If they get any
 They'll get us all, and after I have broken
 The whip upon the pack, as they leap on us.
 Do you hear that?

PEGGY

I hear it, General.

There are no thanks to give, because no words
 Can utter them. But, General, at this time
 Which now is opportune, I'd like to say
 What I have thought of lately.

JACKSON

What is that?

PEGGY

The Rev. Campbell's gone. He's made retreat
 A victory. I feel it. So it is
 That I might well acknowledge and prepare
 For life elsewhere.

JACKSON

What do you mean, my dear?

For life elsewhere? How would you like to hear me
 Use words like that?

PEGGY

Such words are not for you.

JACKSON

Nor you, nor John; nor any of us here
 Who fight the banks, and privilege, and lies.
 Do you suppose I did not sit on thorns
 While Old John Marshall lived and was Chief Justice?
 By the Eternal yes! Now being dead
 Would I not like to fill the seat with one

Who will not bend to turncoats, orators
Who wag the two-forked tongue like Daniel Webster?
Yes, yes! Do I not burn my poor hands with
These lines of statecraft, guiding such fierce steeds,
But loving the excitement, God be praised,
And hoping to run over John Calhoun,
For your sake Peg, for John's as much as any. (*He takes a drink.*)

What's Rev. Campbell?

PEGGY

Nothing beside your might.

JACKSON

Nothing beside the might that you conjure.
The point is should I fly, if there were chance?
Look, Peg, there's Clay. Look what that scoundrel did
About the Bank, deposits, and all that;
Look what he did to me. He had me censured!
He got some censure resolutions passed
On me, me Andrew Jackson, by the Eternal,
That black leg had me censured, and for what?
For trying to save the people.

PEGGY

Don't you have hope
Those resolutions will be expunged?

JACKSON

I doubt it.

PEGGY

Calhoun is down; you've crushed him. As for Clay
Can he rise up again, now that Van Buren
Is president elect by your great favor?

JACKSON

Yes, yes.

PEGGY

Give me such victories with which to balance

Defeats like Rev. Campbell, and I'll not talk
Of flying from the field.

JACKSON

Well, if you go;
If I stand censured still, if Taney fails,
If my niece Mrs. Donelson stays away
I shall be lonely, Peg. For just remember
I never cease to grieve for Rachel, my wife,
Stoned to her death by just such slanderers
Who have stoned you. You know I have been granite
In your behalf in honoring Rachel's life,
And vindicating you for her dear sake.
And why at last? I think I have the clue
By touching the conscious bottom of my life.
Can these walls, and my transient power keep out
The final summoner? My negro slave,
Who loves me and attends me, can with arms
Bar doors as well as I. Well, then I hold
Man has been given reason, and to this use,
In chief to make his preparation
For death when it comes. And I should lie all drugged,
And caught off guard, if I let conscience beg,
And turned away from you. And when you go
Away from Washington, say to Tennessee,
Wherever you may go, will you be safe
As here where I can hold my shield before you
Against the Rev. Campbell or anyone?

PEGGY

Upon my heart I would relieve your arm
Which must be tired with holding it.

JACKSON

What's in your mind?

PEGGY

I have been reading, General.

I read the *Alhambra* recently to pass
The time away; and then my interest taken
I read the *Conquest of Granada* too,
And I'm enthralled with Spain.

JACKSON

So full of whims!

PEGGY

Not whims. I met some Spanish people yesterday
Who told me everything about Madrid.
Duke St. Lorenzo has a palace there,
Which can be rented, the duchess being dead.
The Queen Christina, so these people said,
Is brilliant, charitable and loves her friends.
We should be intimates, I'm sure of that.

JACKSON

Well, but such dreams! Such castles built in Spain!
I see. You want John sent as minister
To Spain.

PEGGY

If I might ask it.

JACKSON

Asking does no harm.

PEGGY

Nor refusing either. But Washington is killing
My very soul. This gossip will go on:
My husband's station in your cabinet
Cows them as little as a snake is cowed
Which hides when chased. Your sovereign power is wasted
In trying to allay it. Rev. Campbell,
The head man of these slanderers, walks from here
Recanting nothing, and imploring heaven
That the blood of Arbuthnot be on your hands.
General you may crush Clay, Calhoun, and make
Your favorite president after you, and cancel

These resolutions censuring you, but this,
My cause is as the air, and cannot be
Defended, or encompassed with your arms
Of strength and chivalry.

JACKSON

By the Eternal! (*He takes a drink.*)

What was that? Someone knocked.

PEGGY

It's John.

JACKSON

Go let him in, my dear.

(*PEGGY goes to the door, returning to JACKSON with a slip of paper which he unfolds and reads.*)

Expunged, by God, wiped off, made null and void,
Cancelled, retracted, quashed and nolle prossed,
Revoked and everything, and I am whole,
My record cleared of this vile reprimand,
My fame enriched, made affluent for all time!

PEGGY

Oh, General! Those resolutions, you mean?

JACKSON

Yes, by the Eternal! Look, this note is from
Sam Houston, the Old Raven, the Texas President
Who can't come in here now, was barred the door,
But sends this note importunately, and can't wait
To have me know it. That's a sly and honest Raven,
A brave old rogue, God bless his rough old hands!
And look you, Peg! You think that this is all?
No, not all. My cup is running over.
Taney has been confirmed.

PEGGY

Oh, General!

JACKSON

Yes, yes, confirmed! And for some years to come,

For thirty years I hope, no twisting laws,
No Marshall stuff, but all clear distillation
Of people's law. (*He takes a drink.*)

My cup is running over!
Who filled it? Why you did, my dear. Except
For this pure cause of yours I had not fought
These devils as I have. So if you asked me
To give you my old Hermitage, I'd do it.
I'd give you anything. Is it Spain you want?

PEGGY

If I may ask it.

JACKSON

Ask it? Ask me anything.
It's Spain. Your husband's minister to Spain,
And you are the minister's wife. Does that content you?

PEGGY

How can I thank you?

JACKSON

Go, and thank Calhoun.
If he had been your friend, I had been his;
Being your enemy I made him mine.
And on this ladder of re-socketed rungs
Martin Van Buren will be president.
The Rev. Campbell is victorious!
Say you that still, your husband being sent
As minister to Spain? Let Rev. Campbell
Rejoice and curse me with that Arbuthnot,
Taney is made chief justice, and my censure
Is cancelled, wiped away. Well, Peggy Eaton,
The piston rod is me, but who's the steam,
Who is the fire that made the steam? Yourself!
Be happy now.

PEGGY

I'm happy, General—

Except—

JACKSON

Except for what?

PEGGY

It's you, my friend,
Whom happiness should crown. In spite of all,
You are not happy.

JACKSON

No, I cannot be
With Rachel dead. God's will is using me;
I have no life that I can call my own.
My life has been a storm, and I have loved it.
I've suffered too, and loved life none the less.
Go now to Spain, my dear. Enjoy your youth.
It makes me happy that I give your youth
The means of happiness. Tell John for me
How all this came to pass. And tell him too
That for his loyal friendship I am glad
To give him honor thus. He is like my son,
And you are like my daughter, Peg. You see
My heart has needed objects for its love,
And with my Rachel gone has missed enough
To use its strength. When you return from Spain
Come to the Hermitage to visit me,
If I am there.

PEGGY

You must await us there.

JACKSON

Well, Peg, I am an old man now. Who knows?
I shall go walking up and down my woods;
I shall go wandering over my pleasant fields,
I shall reflect; for I shall just be waiting.
Even this moment, Peg, my work is done,
My life is lived.

PEGGY (*Taking both his hands in hers and kissing them reverently*)

My friend, my Andrew Jackson—my—!

(*Her voice chokes. She turns and leaves the room.*)

JACKSON (*Walking the room*)

By the Eternal! By the Eternal!

THE CURTAIN

AARON BURR AND MADAM JUMEL

AARON BURR AND MADAM JUMEL

The scene is a drawing room in the stately mansion of MADAM JUMEL in New York City in the year 1834. The room is richly furnished in the style of the Revolutionary period. MADAM JUMEL, a grand lady of sixty-two, is sitting alone, reading letters, sighing and shaking her head. Presently she hears the knocker, and looks about perturbed and anxious. The knocker sounds again and she calls out:

MADAM JUMEL

François! François! Where is François, I wonder?
(Quickly COLONEL BURR, a spry man of seventy-eight enters.
She gasps and says:)
Did François let you in? You didn't enter
Without admission? Just walk in yourself?

BURR

I knocked thrice. But I knew that you were home.

MADAM JUMEL

Well, on my word.

BURR

I beg your pardon madam.
I trust that I am welcome, pray forgive me;
My errand is to tell you what I've done
About your business matters. See these papers?

MADAM JUMEL

Well, but—I have François to answer doors.

BURR

When he is here; when not who answers them?
Was it not better for me to walk right in

Upon this necessary business than
To knock, knock, knock, and bring you to the door?
I'd rather be unmannerly, take the blame,
Than see you answering the door yourself.

MADAM JUMEL

Well, let it go. I'm glad to see you—if—

BURR

If?

MADAM JUMEL

They say so much about you, Colonel Burr,
I'm glad to see you, if I should be glad.

BURR

I can allay your doubt. If a storm driven
Eagle whom the fowlers have pursued,
And wounded too, finds shelter in the sun,
I find a warmth of life in being here,
And thank the business which is my excuse.
I rode up from the city with Rev. Bogart.
He's going on some further. In an hour
Will be here too. I trust that I am welcome.

MADAM JUMEL

Pray have seat.

BURR

Here is my hand; my heart
Has long been yours.
*(He takes her hand, giving his; then seats himself facing
her hypnotically.)*
You used the words "they say." Those words have done
More harm than any two words in the world.
And I have suffered from them. Since you've heard
What "they say," would you like to hear from me
What I say to their "they say?"

MADAM JUMEL

Yes!

BURR

All right.

First to dispose of business: I have looked
Your papers over, written opinions. Here
You'll find all matters cleared and put in order.

MADAM JUMEL

I am your debtor, truly.

BURR

Not at all.

It gives me happiness to serve you. Where
The heart is, there it finds its happiness
In service truly—

(MADAM JUMEL *looks intently at BURR, whose face is pale,*
whose eyes are bright.)

MADAM JUMEL

My friend! Is something wrong?
Your eyes are very brilliant, Colonel Burr.

BURR

Bright for this fuel, madam! All this charm,
This hospitality. I am not used
These later years to goodness such as this.

MADAM JUMEL

Your sufferings have moved me deeply, Colonel.
I mean no matter, even if you're at fault,
Your sufferings have moved me.

BURR

That is kind!

I'll let you see my heart enough to say
That I have suffered. But I have not flinched.
And that is plain to all the world, and meant
To be so. . . . Ah!

MADAM JUMEL

There never seems a time I have not known

Your name. I read when I was just a child
About your great exploits at Quebec.
That's fifty-seven years ago . . . dear me!
It's 1834. (*She looks at him.*)

BURR

My age, perhaps?
I'm seventy-eight, but if I stoop or halt,
Or tremble, hesitate, have slips of tongue,
Or falterings of memory, tell me so.
I rise at five o'clock and take my walk;
Eat sparingly, work all the day. At night
Study philosophy, retire at 'leven,
Then up to do it over. Sixty years
Have seen me live so. And I can go on
For sixty years to come, if I may judge
The possibility by my feelings now.
And all these years more trouble than my tongue
Could find the words to utter, if I would.
But if you'd like to hear my "I say" so
To clear your mind of what "they say—"

MADAM JUMEL

Oh, yes!

I beg of you.

BURR

I'll please you with two things,
All truth as well: From boyhood I have loathed
The Puritan; and you could not be French
And loathe that loathing.

MADAM JUMEL

That's a little strong.
Rather I laugh. Since I was born at sea
I have a wider vision of the shore.
I laugh at them, and being of French blood,
My father was a Capet.

BURR

Yes, I know.

MADAM JUMEL

You know!

BURR

Why, yes! A name as bright as yours
May change, but fades not.

MADAM JUMEL

Ah! But for the sake
Of Stephen Jumel I am French.

BURR

You took
No lasting influence from Peter Croix?

MADAM JUMEL

That scarce concerns us—you, I might have said.

BURR

I beg your pardon. Do not take me ill
You are a notable, and I am one.
And what we've lived is known.

MADAM JUMEL

Well, let it pass.

BURR

One could not talk with you, keep out of mind
Your brilliancy of life, the admiration
That New York gave you once as Mrs. Croix;
Still less the splendor of your life in Paris,
Napoleon's friendship for yourself, monsieur,
Your life, its richness, and these world adventures,
Backgrounds "they say."

MADAM JUMEL

How so?

BURR

Ay, plainly, plainly

My life had prospered if America
Had been step-mothered, reared into respect
Of France instead of England. Just suppose
Jumel had brought Napoleon to this house,
And saved him St. Helena, as he planned,
Our lives had all been different. Rather fitting
To bring Napoleon here where Washington,
The rebel lived.

MADAM JUMEL

The rebel?

BURR

Don't they say so?

And was he not adventurer called as well?

MADAM JUMEL

By the English!

BURR

Yes, and that's the very point.

It's English genius for destroying names
That tried to blacken me.

MADAM JUMEL

Tried!

BURR

I chose that word.

What I am in my essence will be known.

MADAM JUMEL

One thing: You're not a Puritan, that is clear.
I see you're not.

BURR

Never! And hence for me
New England's enmity. The second thing
I hate what you must hate, the British Tory:
The loyalist, the American Tory, those
Who slacked, and plotted, shot us in the back,

Us who defended Bunker Hill, and climbed
The snows around Quebec. They crippled us,
And helped to starve us. But when all was won
They asked an equal sharing in the prize
With us who won it. And I killed a man
Who in a hypocritic cry of equal
Rights assisted them. You hate the Tory?

MADAM JUMEL

I could not be French blood and love the Tory.

BURR

Why, no! For 'twas the secret Tory hand
That stayed America in gratitude
To France who helped us in the Revolution.
So now we have a common ground of love
In hating Puritans and British Tories.
And so I'll show you how my life and fame
Have suffered by them.

MADAM JUMEL

Tell me, Colonel Burr.

BURR

Well, if my grandsire, Jonathan Edwards lifted
My weak unmerit into power and fame
By his New England backing; if my father,
As president of Princeton, stamped my metal,
And made it coin and current, why did I
Forsake their teachings, nay, accept them not
From youth up, madam? I was born from them,
But never of them. As a boy I hated
The angry God that Jonathan Edwards preached,
And used my heritage from him, the mind
Like a mirror of silver with a flame upon it,
To analyze and wither up such bogies.

MADAM JUMEL

How strange you are!

BURR

But listen and be clear
About me, as I'll strive to make myself.
My mother, Esther Edwards, what was she,
Reared by this Jonathan? Passion for God,
And analytics, wrought to passion, breed
Clear passion for—why liberty or art!
True the world over! Theology begets
Poetry, tyrannicides—

MADAM JUMEL

And villains sometimes.

BURR

Yes, madam, you jest, but it's true as well.
And sometimes I imagine Esther hid
Her thought and nature; that the thing she hid
Was me, and as she hid me in her womb
My mind was hidden in her mind, and broke
To orbits of free thinking, liberty
And courage which has cursed me in this land
Of Jonathan, my grandsire.

For my father
Was all this Jonathan would have him be,
A theologian and a Puritan.
I stood aloof from all of it, as a boy.
And I remember once a lady came,
Old and precise and pious, dressed in silk.
My father's house was just a house of prayer,
Study, devotion, discipline. She came
To talk religion. I was sick of it.
And as she passed the garden through, I pelted
Her silk dress from a tree with cherries.

MADAM JUMEL

Colonel!

BURR

Oh, you shall have the truth from me. 'Twas rude,

Most rude and shocking. But do you perceive
No pent rebellion breaking? Well, I paid
With the most frightful lashing for this prank.
My father beat me till his arm was tired.
And which was worse, to beat me, or to pelt
This ancient dame with cherries? I had cause
Of just rebellion, boredom long endured,
To throw the cherries, and that took away
My father's cause to beat me.

MADAM JUMEL

How you remember

Those feelings of your youth!

BURR

I have forgotten

Nothing in my life. And that explains
Why I am so old and yet so young, my friend.
I said I hate the Puritan. I do.
I always have. And I would not withdraw
That hatred to re-make my life, become
The President.

Now, madam, need I speak
To answer what "they say," of soldier service,
And work for independence?

MADAM JUMEL

Colonel Burr!

I've shed tears, with a beating heart, to read
How you defied the enemy's fire to carry
The body of Montgomery from Quebec,
And you so young a man. Until this moment
I have not realized what a giant heart
Beat in so small a body.

BURR

I am thrilled

To hear you say so! Do not think I boast:

I never knew what fear was—

MADAM JUMEL

But you ran

After—

BURR

You mean this Hamilton affair?

That was not fear. But I'll explain anon.

MADAM JUMEL

You were a soldier of the bravest type,
The highest loyalty.

BURR

And I rose from that.
And in it Jonathan Edwards, and my father,
Had never a hand, by prestige, or by fame
Of goodness, blood or wisdom.

Well, you know

After Quebec I joined the staff of Washington.
He was a dull, sincere, and padded prophet,
A Zeus mask for this Hamilton, who knew
His blind sides, ageing will, discernment; knew
The way to use him. Hamilton could see
That I divined him. As for Washington
I never liked him, had myself transferred
To Putnam on the harbor of New York.
I wrecked my health in service, took to bed,
Resigned and studied law.

The will is free

To study twenty hours a day! I grant
That freedom of the will. And twenty hours
I studied, as old Jonathan before me
Fasted and studied Holy Writ and Hebrew.
They licensed me to practice.

MADAM JUMEL

And "they say"

You entered at the front rank at the bar.

BURR

To fight the loyalists in the courts, expose
This Hamilton.

MADAM JUMEL

After so many years
Do you repent not killing him?

BURR

Not at all!

He was a casuist, a sneak, a libeler—
I'll tell you later. Treason, what is it?
Betraying maps of battles to the foe?
Is it not also telling despotism
How to make entrance and destroy the charters
Of liberty? He did that. And I killed him.

MADAM JUMEL

Not for that.

BURR

Indeed for that! A wedge
Is thick at one end—that's his treason to
The liberty I fought for, though the edge
Was his inveterate slanders.

I had risen
To the very heights, lacked but a single vote
To make me president. What's my nature, madam,
When by this genius for the thaumaturgy
Of politics, I might have won the prize,
And didn't, but kept second place, respecting
The people's choice of Jefferson? Behold
That man's ingratitude! But tell me now
Was that a loftiness of mind, or what?
What do "they say?" Let history speak for me.
What was I as a senator? Clean and fair?
What as vice-president? Just, firm and wise?

"They say" is nothing of unfavor here.
But when I ran for governor, then the buckets
Of filth were poured upon me—and by whom?
By Federalists, New England, all of those
Who thrive by Jonathan Edwards. Just reflect
How ludicrous to say I rose by him,
Deny my merit that I rose alone!
Why, if I had been off-shoot of this stalk
Would all the Schuylers, Livingstones have fought me?
Their breed, their kind? Would Hamilton have fought me
With whispers and with gestures? No! And how?
By calling me a dangerous man. How so?
What had I done as lawyer, senator,
Vice-president, to justify that slur?
Nothing! The truth is I inherited
Old Jonathan's dialectic skill, and used it
Not for theology, but politics.
And I could beat this Hamilton at his game
Of playing chess with men, surprise his tricks
With quick discovery, so he slandered me.
I was a mongoose to his cobra, hence
He hissed these slanders.

I am imperturbed
By nature, know the ways of self-control.
But I boiled over with a frozen stuff
Of venom at the last. I am defeated
For governor by these slanders! From this I date
The bitter consequence of after life.
Suppose I had ignored this Hamilton?
I had gone on and higher! My regret
Is not for killing him, but boiling over!
Study the lives of men, madam, you'll find
Their downfall dates from sudden revolution
Of spirit, long restrained. Madness it is
Of anger fashioned.

But I had endured

What he had done to damage my esteem
With Washington, with Adams. Doomed himself,
As alien born to second rate success,
He took the role of whisperer in the ear
Of presidents—and ruled. And so with Adams
This cost me an appointment in the army
When war with France impended. On he went
Sowing his slanders and in fertile soil.
Till Cheetham, journalistic tool of him
Was twitting me: Is Colonel Burr so sunk
In spirit that he cannot be insulted?
Stung by defeat, and by these twittings then
I asked him for an explanation. “Did
You say to Dr. Cooper I was one
Not to be trusted with the government?”
Madam, a clear mind briefly speaks and clear.
It is the quality of chicane and fear.
To be prolix and turgid.

And his answer
To this, my simple question, did you say this,
Was long past my endurance, twisted, slick,
Like intermatted crawlers, soaked with slime.
He could not thus be, questioned! He declined
To answer yes, or no! And as it took him
Two hours for speaking in the courts what I
Could say in twenty minutes, so it took him
Page after page to say that he declined
To answer yes or no. What was his mind?
A coward’s and a sneak’s, an envious mind,
A vain, self-puffed, designing, crooked mind!

MADAM JUMEL

A coward, say you?

BURR

Yes, my friend, a coward.
Judge by this letter, by his tortuous plots

To mould our country to the British system.
But I have evidence I can't bequeath:
That was his eyes, when he raised up the pistol—
A little later of this.

Well, then to me
He wouldn't affirm, retract, or even explain;
But just before the duel he writes out
A statement, says he hopes he may have been
Mistaken more in what he said of me
Than he thinks he has been. Mistaken more!
Mistaken some, that is! He throws away
His life for pride; would rather risk his life
Than face me, and if wrong, say, I am wrong;
If right, then brave me with the truth; and if
I'm murderer enough to kill for truth
Be murdered. No, a twister to the death!
And I shall not forget some nights before
I killed him, we were table mates at dinner
Of the Cincinnati. I inherited
Reserve and calmness from old Jonathan,
And will, too, and clear courage. And this night
I was the cobra's mongoose, staring him,
Until his nervous eye-lids flickered, eyes
Took on the sneak look, as I gazed him out.
And when he sang "The Drum" I sat, looked up
Steadily at him till he winced. And when
He reached the words: "So bring your Bible and
Follow the drum," I felt a little smile
Dapple the corners of my mouth. He swayed.
The Bible and the drum, that's Hamilton!

MADAM JUMEL

What Colonel, you an atheist?

BURR

I am coy.

I've risen by my ancestors' religion

As little as by their politics: No Puritan,
No monarchist.

Well, the duel. I return
To Hamilton as coward.

We stood up.
And when the seconds asked us, "Are you ready,"
Hamilton caught my eye, and quailed and looked
The felon that he was.

Then he fired first—

MADAM JUMEL

They say he didn't fire at all.

BURR

"They say."

Madam, I swear to you he fired at me.
The bullet cut a twig above my head.
And then I fired. As I was unafraid
My aim was true. I hit him. He sprang up
Convulsively on toes, and fell.

MADAM JUMEL

You thrill me!

I am afraid of you!

BURR

Be not afraid.

Hear my soul's story, and my loneliness
These thirty years. And why such loneliness,
Such ostracism? Was I the first to practice
The monomachy? Why were not Wellington,
Fox, Sheridan and Jeffrey, Walpole, Pitt,
Grattan and Lamartine, Decatur, Gates,
Clay, Jackson, ostracised? They duelled too!
Why was my act particular? I will tell you:
I killed the high priest of this Federalism.
He was American Imperialism's
First martyr, on his death the church was built

Of Puritanism in America.
History's dramatic moment had arrived.
And I became the Pilate, cursed, and yet
His faith survives because I killed him, faith
That would have died if he had lived, perhaps.

MADAM JUMEL

I fear you, Colonel! What shall I say?

BURR

Be free.

MADAM JUMEL

You're growing clearer to me.

BURR

My friend, from you

I have no thought or purpose to conceal,
And nothing in my life. I need you too.
I need a home, companionship. Thirty years
Of drifting and of loneliness. Ah! no words
Can tell about it.

MADAM JUMEL

You must not speak so.

BURR

I was about to tell you what I saw
Last Spring while walking out at five o'clock,
The sun just up, birds singing, and the Hudson
Bright as a golden mirror. And I walked
To Richmond Hill, scene of my flowering days.
There on the lawn I saw an apple tree,
Which I had planted, broken, tangled, scaled,
Dead in the branches—all but one. That branch
A mass of blossoms. And I said to self:
"That's you. You planted it. It has paced your life.
It's dead as you are, all except that branch,
Which feeds, and must, through living wood of the trunk
To roots that live." That's I: strength unexhausted,

And will to live, and hope that dreams a home;
A love that can be given, and a love
Striven for and attained. Madam, that branch
Blossoms for you.

MADAM JUMEL

Forbear! You must not speak
That language to me. I have come to you
For help with my affairs. You must not take
Occasion for such language.
(*She rises; a maid enters with tea.*)
What's the hour?

BURR

It's time for tea.

MADAM JUMEL (*Laughing*)

Will you have tea or brandy?

BURR

"Twixt the two

My preference is tea. My custom is
One drink a day, a glass of wine at night,
These many years.

MADAM JUMEL

So temperate!

BURR

Quite so.

My answer to "they say" I am a drunkard.

MADAM JUMEL

Oh, tush!

BURR

Your confidence in me is growing.

MADAM JUMEL

I almost need a brandy.

BURR

I am grieved

To find you suffering.

MADAM JUMEL

It's my mind that suffers.

I have my days of memories.

BURR

Memories! Madam!

MADAM JUMEL

And this is one. I've done a foolish thing.

BURR

Impossible!

MADAM JUMEL

Oh, yes. I've spent the day

In reading letters. Do you ever so?

BURR

Yes, to renew my happiest, clearest self

I read my daughter Theodosia's letters.

She loved me and believed in me to the end.

Her mother did. I read her letters, too.

Her mother, madam! All my life was changed

When Theodosia's mother died.

MADAM JUMEL

Forgive me,

I am most curious.

BURR

Of what?

MADAM JUMEL

Of this:

That you could love two women, as you did

Your wife and daughter, with such tender love,

With love that never wavered, never shirked

Devotion, sacrifice, nay sanctified

Itself and you by something not of earth

In spiritual union, beauty—yet—

BURR

Yet—well—

MADAM JUMEL

You know what I imply!

BURR

These many amours?

MADAM JUMEL

Not true?

BURR

Not true!

MADAM JUMEL

How strange!

BURR

That's not to say

I have been blind to beauty and delight.

No, madam! But scrub women never charmed me

As we have proof they did St. Hamilton.

How could I live and waste myself, how live

Vitality to this age, if I had squandered

Body or mind in amours?

MADAM JUMEL

Oh! Like Goethe!

BURR

Goethe! I saw him often in Weimar

When I was wandering in exile. Madam,

Natural things are innocent, if done

In innocence of mind, with temperate heart,

In fairness and with will beneficent,

Not harming, since exempt from harm.

MADAM JUMEL

I see.

You do confess then?

BURR

To no sordid thing.
I never was a Puritan. That makes
For Puritan gossip. And as Goethe lived
My senior by five years, though lied about,
Perhaps I'll live to ripe age, spite of lies—
I laugh. That helps.

MADAM JUMEL

Colonel, these lies are not
Explained because you're not a Puritan,
And that alone. You either did these things—

BURR

What things, explain?

MADAM JUMEL

Why, everything, I mean.
You either did them, or you thought them, acted
So near to thought that to the cursory eye
You seemed to do them. Now there's Blennerhesset—

BURR

Of which I was acquitted—and by whom?
The St. Luke of St. Peter in the faith
Of holy Federalism. Madam! There is no hate
Like imitative hate, no wrath like that
Which feeds upon another's wrath, exists
In simulation. Had we cause to fear
Napoleon as the English had? Yet look!
The Federalists whipped America to fear,
And hatred of him, as he were our foe
And danger. We took wrath for England's sake
In imitation, set up despotisms
Of speech to follow England, had no cause
Peculiar to ourselves. Why Alien laws
In our Republic? Just our mimic wrath,
And mimic fear.

Now madam, your attention:

Jefferson is in his grave, can be assayed
By talk or history. I esteemed him once,
But changed my estimation.

MADAM JUMEL

Did he aught

But execute the laws against you, Colonel?

BURR

He did. I pass it. For I make the point
He was against these Alien laws. I stood
With him in democratic causes. So
When I killed Hamilton, now please observe
That was the signal and the chance to wreak
Hatred of Jefferson upon my head,
Next highest head to his in leadership.
And thus this actor anger, which inspired
Hatred of France's Revolution, hatred
Of great Napoleon, was in practiced form
To turn upon me, and take Hamilton,
Whom I slew fairly, as pretended cause
To ruin me, and in that ruin break
The strength of Jefferson, the liberal faith.
Do you not see? Why else indict me? Why
This hubbub for a duel? All excuse
That I was driven to it by his libels
Drowned in a general curse? A simple thing!
History's satiric hand gave me the pistol,
And made me, one, lone, unsupported man
The pivot of a turn in Time.

MADAM JUMEL

And then

You fled.

BURR

Yes, fled.

MADAM JUMEL

You fled!

BURR

How could I stand?

Fear's not the word. I would not stand my ground
In a great pasture of a thousand bulls,
Charging upon me. Where no honor is
For standing ground, who stands? At least not I.
I was well dressed, being vice-president,
And saw these bulls could dust me any way.
Why not glide out until the bulls retired?
I went away and wandered through the south,
Came back at last, when time had given the bulls
Calmness again, and finished up my office.
Found myself ruined for the time, at least,
And set off for the west to build again.

MADAM JUMEL

And wrecked yourself the more.

BURR

Yes, madam, yes!

MADAM JUMEL

Give me the secret.

BURR

Too intricate.

MADAM JUMEL

I mean

What you are, what moved in you, that spun forth
Complexity of ruin. Was it not this:
Your self-contention, and your realest nature
Once loosened, and once muddled, wandered wild,
Or wandered to deep waters? Your spring of life
Shot upward to the sun, so long as rocks
Of single purpose narrowed the stream. The rocks

Removed, your waters spewed beneath the leaves,
Hope being gone. 'Twas that.

BURR

At least 'twas this:

My hope was gone, hope of advancing life
Beyond vice-president.

MADAM JUMEL

Yet you would rule.

BURR

A mind like mine can rest not.

MADAM JUMEL

So you planned

Your country's downfall.

BURR

No! Madam. No! No!

No more than Hamilton planned such a thing
When he coquetted with the revolutionists
In South America. Think! And at the time
Hamilton was second in command
Of the American Army! No! Madam! You err.
But when I dreamed of Mexico in that day
What was our country? Well, not what today
The country is. To plot its overthrow
Today were different than to plot it then,
Some thirty years ago. And every year
Will make such business more detestable.
But if this Hamilton could call this frame
Of government a worthless fabric, strive
By fundings, tariffs, banks and federal courts
To monarchize its nature, could not I,
With sin no greater, build a separate realm
With Mexico for center, lift again
The banner of freedom on a favoring soil?
The mind of Jonathan Edwards rises in me

To see a sin, however it's disguised,
 By whomsoever done, or hailed as good.
 That puts the case at fullest strength. But look!
 What was the proof against me? Idle tales!
 Who were the witnesses? Wastrels and rogues!
 Madam! My mind is sovereign, and I stood
 Detached.

MADAM JUMEL

Somewhat satanic—

BURR

Cool and clear,
 And laughed to hear them wrangle, and affirm,
 Deny and guess, and contradict each other.
 If I had been the devil, magic gifted,
 Changing my face and cloak at every square,
 And walking mischief bent 'mong simple souls,
 Who see the devil this way, that way, I
 Could not have heard more various reports
 About me and my plots, than those I heard
 In courts in Mississippi, and at Richmond.
 But why was I acquitted? Here I had killed
 The Prince of Federalism. Here I was tried
 Before great Marshall, bitter Federalist!
 Why not convicted? And who prosecuted?
 My former friend, and now my enemy,
 The demos-leader Jefferson, working all
 The terrible machines at his command,
 Of prestige, proclamations, lawyers, spies
 To hunt me down, capture me and destroy.
 What was the matter, madam? Are my wits
 More numerous than all their wits?

Why not!

I use a figure: Fancy an army bivouacked,
 Commanded by a timorous blunderbuss.
 A field mouse sniffs among the withered leaves,

And blunderbuss wakes up and thinks the foe
Approaches, turns the cannon loose.

The mouse

Was my offending, and the blunderbuss
Was Jefferson, and the cannon all this fury
Of lawyers, courts, orders and arguments.
The thing was silly.

Why the honor done me
In Richmond, when in jail, and at the trial?
Why calls, bouquets, and levees every day?
Why these two hundred gentlemen to guard me
When I walked daily from the jail to court?
Why Andrew Jackson's friendship, who was there?
Why lawyers volunteering to defend me,
The greatest of their day? Why, who am I?
I have no money, power, or gifts to give,
No future with a promise of repayment.
Why, madam, why?

MADAM JUMEL

I don't know, Colonel Burr.

I wish you'd tell me.

BURR

Simple as the truth.

I had done nothing in its essence wrong.
And glory to the human mind! Again
Its sabres flashed, and cut the tentacles
Of the devil fish and freed me; but with wounds,
And loss of blood, not healed yet, or restored.
Madam, had I gained Mexico, or Texas,
What was to follow? That they should attract
Louisiana, or Louisiana them?
What's on today? Why General Houston lives
In Texas, and how long will Texas be
A fee of Mexico, how soon become
A part of the United States? Is he

Fomenting trouble with a foreign power
With which we are at peace? That was the charge
With which they fouled me. But the times are changed:
Cotton is after Texas. There's no evil
That gold cannot make good. And I, the abstract,
At least indefinite mind for conquest, land,
Must see my purpose selfish, clothed in self.
Whereas had it been robed in cotton, being
Fashionable cloth, that were an altruistic,
And glorious phalactery.

MADAM JUMEL

Oh, well!

The page is written. What I think is this:
You marched up to the border of your will,
From whence you could have seized the promised land,
If Fate had prospered you. Caught standing there
You could protest you only came to look.
My friend! You need not act to be divined,
Nor speak, but only think. Our thoughts are known.
And what's lived in the mind becomes the key
Wherewith the world unlocks us.

BURR

Be it so.

You have your memories, and I have mine.
That branch of me that blossoms can look up
To stars, and blues of mornings, not look down
On dead knots, burrs decaying, barkless trunks.
It can look up with you. My heart is yours.
It opens leaves, exhales its soul before
This hearth of yours.

Madam! Do you divine

My loneliness, these thirty years of storm?
Honor me that I have one blossomed branch,
Which neither winter wind, nor April gust
Tore from me. Ah! You need me. I can be

Your counselor, your guide, support and friend.

MADAM JUMEL

And I your purse!

BURR

That is a bitter word.

Draw any ante-nuptial bond you wish.

Were I your husband—

MADAM JUMEL

That shall never be—

I ask your pardon for my weariness.

BURR

Have more tea!

MADAM JUMEL (*Laughing*)

Yes! I never miss my tea.

And there is always more than one can drink.

BURR

Tea is a habit, madam, like—

MADAM JUMEL

Our thoughts.

BURR

Hum! Yes. And that reminds me. Isn't it strange
How something sticks with one through life?

MADAM JUMEL

Most strange!

BURR

You see—I mean—Bogart all afternoon
Was talking Mexico. And here it is
Some four and twenty years ago today
That I set forth for England.

MADAM JUMEL

Is it true?

But why for England?

BURR

That's the very point
Of the day, the memory, and Bogart's talk.
I did not go to England for my health,
Or my delight—

MADAM JUMEL

Mexico—

BURR

Yes, that's it,
To interest Castlereagh in Mexico.

MADAM JUMEL

And then America had—

BURR

Almost, not quite,
Not altogether turned on me—not quite—
I had my friends.

MADAM JUMEL

You had become a vane
Storm whirled and zephyr turned.

BURR

Perhaps, well yes!
But I had friends, went down to Baltimore
After I was acquitted—honored there.
Why, even the Federalists—

MADAM JUMEL

Forbear! They used you
To tantalize the sage of Monticello.
They hated you, but hated Jefferson
With blacker hatred. He had prosecuted
The case against you, and they thwarted him
By your acquittal. And they stung his pride
By warming to you with pretended heat.
That is the truth. You left America

To build anew.

BURR

Is that so wonderful?

One thing alone has never changed in me:
Aspiring energy.

MADAM JUMEL

But objects—

BURR

Well!

I tried to take Quebec, and couldn't do it.
Did I forsake the Revolution? No!
The compass-case changed pockets and positions,
The needle always pointed north.

And yet

If leaving law for politics was progress—
And how my Theodosia grieved for this—
To win the heights almost, and not attain
The presidency, mine in time, I thought—
Well, I confess my balanced scale of mind
Tipped out of me, weight at the beam's end. So
Nothing was left but Mexico. I speak
Not to exculpate, but explain. You see
I have no secrets from you, would be clear.
And so I went to interest Castlereagh.

MADAM JUMEL

You didn't. But what happened?

BURR

Rather strange!

England until that day had just as lief
Seen Spain despoiled of Mexico, and me
Its ruler, I believe. But on that day
Napoleon's brother Joseph, entered Madrid
As king of Spain. That made a friend of England
For Spain, and Castlereagh was deaf.

MADAM JUMEL

What luck!

But then Napoleon—

BURR

Well, I wasn't in France,
Not yet; and when I got there wished me out,
I'll tell you all about it.

MADAM JUMEL

Do!

BURR

However,
Napoleon couldn't brook the independence
Of Mexico. As well see Brittany
Set up a separate kingdom.

MADAM JUMEL

So you failed!

BURR

At last, I did.

MADAM JUMEL

And in between did what?
"They say" so much.

BURR

And would you like to hear?

MADAM JUMEL

Indeed I should.

BURR

I made a friend of Bentham,
And lived with him. My funds were rather short.
I had to borrow money for this trip.
My trial for—

MADAM JUMEL

Treason—

BURR

Call it that,

I am reminded of an ancient saw:
Treason doth never prosper. What's the reason?
When it doth prosper none dare call it treason.
So none dare speak of Washington as traitor.
As I was saying, I was short of funds,
The trial, and my distractions left me poor.
It overcame me with its awfulness
First there in England, then in Sweden, France.
And money from the sales of properties
Was slow in coming. Meantime I was busy
About my project, lived and was received,
And honored, fêted. That was always true
At first—

MADAM JUMEL

At first?

BURR

Why, yes, at first, you know,

Before my enemies—

MADAM JUMEL

Could veer the wind.

BURR

Quite so.

MADAM JUMEL

Americans?

BURR

Yes. And the stormy times.

All places flocked with suspects. Americans
Were everywhere, and I had enemies
Who used the matter of this Hamilton
As motive malice to traduce my name
For Blennerhasset. Then as I had come
Expressly in this Mexican affair

They had the colors on their palettes, furnished
By circumstance, myself, to paint me—

MADAM JUMEL

What?

BURR

A dangerous man—

MADAM JUMEL

So Hamilton described you.

BURR

Do you believe it?

MADAM JUMEL

How can I divine

What you were then?

BURR

H'm, dangerous no more!

Madam! I never was, except as thought
Is dangerous to those of lesser thought.
But, to resume, there was my poverty,
And that cannot be hidden, not for long.
Now look! It's London or it's Copenhagen.
I enter as the once vice-president.
Perhaps my manner and address enhance
The dignity and splendor of that title.
I dazzle, am embraced; the extra candles
Are lighted on the walls and tables. While
Eyes beam upon me, out a candle goes!
Out goes another, and out goes another!
The ghost of Hamilton has blown them out!
The lying rhetoric of William Wirt,
Which couldn't win the jury to convict me,
Steals like a fetid ether in a ball room,
Blows out a candle! Though I have charmed,
This hurts me, for they give a credent ear
To tales of my seduction of poor girls,

And Blennerhasset's wife— You're moved, I see,
And I am grateful.

MADAM JUMEL

Tears are daily things
To those who know how cruel life can be!

BURR

The candles all are out in England now,
All save at Bentham's. There it is a taper
To read by, or to light myself to bed.
They come and tell me England is embarrassed—
His Majesty, forsooth—to have me there.
I charge this up to Jefferson. And yet
Had I not been too scrupulous of honor
I could have been the president, not he.
No matter now! But I have dinner with Scott,
I have been banqueted in Edinburg.
And I go on to Gottesberg, and on
To Stockholm, Elsinore and Copenhagen,
Am greatly entertained—

MADAM JUMEL (*Laughing*)

Have great romances

"They say" of you.

BURR

I'll tell you everything
I go to Hamburg, and society
Receives me, but Americans are thick.
They cut me. I am on my way to France,
And wait for passports, and my money fails.
I have to pawn some trinkets and some books.

MADAM JUMEL

Tsch! Tsch!

BURR

It's just as well one soul should know
This story. Now you see my loneliness!

And for a year no word from Theodosia.
And when I wrote her it was happily.
Then turned to make an entry in my diary:
"How sage and dignified a man can be
With just three sous."

MADAM JUMEL

Why Colonell

BURR

Not the worst.

I went to Weimar. At an evening party
Conversed with Goethe. Boundaries were nothing
To Goethe, he believed in men, the world,
World literature; was like a mountain standing
With snows and rainbows, vineyards, living streams
Amid the smoky hate of patriot wars,
Almost a god.

But I went on to Gotha.
The ducal family dined me; was presented
At court. But then it's always the return
To your hotel, so lonely, or at last
Your garret.

MADAM JUMEL

Terrible!

BURR

Now to romance.

There was the D'Or. You've heard! She honored me
With her affection. I returned it too.
We went about together constantly.
I was about to give up Mexico,
And wed the D'Or. But Mexico had twined
Its vines around my will, and dragged me on.
I fled the D'Or. Reached Paris, was received
By Volney and the Duchess of D'Alberg.
Accomplished nothing. Almost starved in Paris.

Was watched, refused a leave, at last escaped
To Holland, back to London, back to Bentham.
Pawn books again, my watch, have little rooms.
If you could see my diary: "Bought two pounds
Of bread, a pound of sugar, three pence left."
Sometimes this entry: "Nothing but potatoes,
And bread today."

MADAM JUMEL

What would your grandsire say?

BURR

Perhaps a soul crushed by an angry God!
He never painted horrors worse than mine—
And you are weeping, madam!

MADAM JUMEL

Oh! My friend.

BURR

Friend! There!

MADAM JUMEL

What is it?

BURR

Just for a second then

My heart stopped still—

MADAM JUMEL

Some brandy?

BURR

After wine?

You called me friend. That stopped my heart. It beats.
I love you—

MADAM JUMEL

No!

BURR

I love you. I am warm
Before this hearth. I have been cold. No matter.

Oh, I was cold the night I caught the ship,
When I left England, missed it at the pier,
And paid three guineas to be rowed to Gravesend,
Some thirty miles from London. It was March.
I had no overcoat, the wind was bitter.
We rowed twelve miles to find the ship beyond
Ten miles, and I was numb, we had to rest.
I could not move, they lifted me to a tavern.
I warmed with grog, and we set out again.
I bought some straw, and made a bed in the boat.
Slept as they rowed. At midnight we hauled up
Alongside the AURORA, paid my rowers,
And went on board without a copper cent.
England adieu! *Insula Inhospitabilis!*
In Boston found my friends. And went to Princeton,
Was welcomed! Walked through Nassau Hall again;
And saw the cherry tree whence I had thrown
The cherries. Thence to the cemetery
Where they may bury me. But where? My father
Is buried with the presidents of Princeton.
I'd rather sleep by Theodosia, but
The waves had her for burial. No one knows
How bitterly the heart cries to the sea
That will not yield a loved one! Well, again
New York, a lawyer's life, and by good fate
Yourself as client, friend, and this my love
Which would protect you, counsel you—
(*The knocker is heard.*)

MADAM JUMEL

Who's that?

BURR

That's Rev. Bogart come to marry us.

(MADAM JUMEL *looks astonished, then languishes.* BURR
takes her by the hand, and lifts her to her feet, then

embraces her. The door is heard opening, low voices at the door, and then steps.)

BURR

My love! My wife!

(MADAM JUMEL now has her head on BURR's shoulder in a gesture of surrender.)

THE CURTAIN

RABELAIS AND THE QUEEN OF WHIMS

RABELAIS AND THE QUEEN OF WHIMS

The scene is a room in the palace of the QUEEN OF WHIMS. In the center is a table around which are some chairs. On the table a large bottle of wine. The QUEEN is lying on a sumptuous couch in the corner, but she is so covered up that her presence is unsuspected by RABELAIS. RABELAIS enters garbed as a canon of the Benedictines. Under one arm he is carrying a huge book. In the other hand he has a large glass bottle held by a string tied to the handle. The bottle is empty. He is in the haze of drink, and scarcely knows where he is. He looks about indifferently, and wanders about with half unsteady step. He begins to sing:

RABELAIS

You toss pots, tavern haunters,
You revelers mad and gay,
You Bacchanalian vaunters
Look now on Rabelais,
Whose breast hides paradoxes,
And high philosophies,
Like jewels shut in boxes
With lids of bridled geese;
With ducks that have been saddled,
With Harpies and hornèd hares,
And goats by fairies straddled—
But oh, inside what wares!
What musk, what balm, what civet,
What jewels, ambergris.
I'm boozy, but forgive it,
For virtues such as these!

(He goes about the room, passes where the QUEEN OF

WHIMS is lying, who does not stir. He thinks it is Panurge and mutters, "Thou drunken, slothful Panurge." He be-thinks him that he is in a place of royalty and breaks into song again) :

There was a queen once reigning
 Who had a big black flea,
 And loved him past explaining
 As her own son were he.
 She called her man of stitches;
 The tailor came straightway:
 Here, measure my son for breeches,
 And measure his coat, I say.

(He now lifts up his bottle, being greatly athirst, and seeing that it is empty, a wry expression comes over his countenance.)

RABELAIS

Adored Panurge, sweet clodpole, penniless devotee of Pantagruel, prithee where is the wine all gone? What? Shall I speak to you in German? In Arabic, in Biscayan, in Bas-Breton, in Low Dutch? What? Or in Danish, Hebrew, Greek, Latin? Or can you speak only French? Very good! Or haply can you speak at all? Trink, sir. That word is known to all tongues. By the horns of Hermes, and Bacchus, by the horns of Jupiter Hammon, by all advocates, attorneys, glossers, commentators, innkeepers, by the sow of St. Joseph, where is all the wine? What? Sound asleep! (He breaks into song again.)

To leap and dance, to sport and play,
 And drink good wine both white and brown:
 Or nothing else to do all the day,
 But tell bags full of many a crown.

(He looks again at his empty bottle, and feels at his pockets.) Panurge! How much silver have we left? Take thy fill of sleep base tiny Bartholomew. (He now spies the large bottle of wine on the table, and in an ecstasy

sets his own empty bottle down and stands before the table apostrophizing the discovered wine) :

Bottle! Whose mysterious deep
Doth ten thousand secrets keep,
With a watering mouth at first
Ease my mind, and quench my thirst.
Soul of Joy! Like Bacchus we
More than India gain by thee.
Truths unborn thy juice reveals
Which futurity conceals.
Antidote to lies and frauds,
Killer off of lesser gods.
May thy father Noah's blood
Like him drown, but in thy flood.
Let this Panurge not awake
Anywise his thirst to slake.
May you sleep like Tartarus' pup
While I drink this bottle up.

(He pours himself a large glass full and drinks it down.) Ah! (Then he sits by the table and while tippling talks to the person he imagines is Panurge.)

To rise at five, to dine at nine,
To sup at five, to sleep at nine.
But at all hours to have good wine,
Is excellent as I opine.

Are you dreaming of matrimony, Panurge? Shall you marry, and if so shall you have horns put upon that gay vacuity that is your skull? You have now consulted on this our journey hither to find the Holy Bottle many and divers soothsayers, sibyls, geomancers, oracles, fortune tellers, witches, sorcerers, magic oaks and the like, and each and every has told thee, Thou shalt marry; but thou shalt wear horns. Well, sirrah, wear horns. It is no great matter whilst wine abounds.

QUEEN OF WHIMS *(Still unidentified)*

I shall not marry.

RABELAIS

So say you now after stuffing yourself last night with fine sheeps' heads, brave haslets with mustard, gallant salligots with garlick, neats tongues dried in smoke, pots of fresh cheese, rams cod, caviar, spinach, salads, colly flowers, mushrooms, beans, anchovies, cresses, pickled griggs, snails, lobsters, dabs and sandings, figs, chestnuts, pistachioes, and the devil knows what; washing the same into thy insatiate gullet with all manner of wine. So sayest thou now, with thy intellects stupefied with more gases than Aristotle dreamed of. But let reason, or what is with thee the lack thereof, resume her throne, and thou wilt be about consulting of other augurs whether thou shalt marry. And each shall tell thee as before.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

No.

RABELAIS

Thou shalt marry, and be very
Ludicrous with horns to carry.
There'll be quips thou canst not parry;
Fingers pointed thee shall harry.
If thou wouldst not sleep and tarry.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

No.

RABELAIS

You speak like that semiquavering Friar that we met on the Island of Sandals, all in words of one syllable. Shall we journey from here today?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

No.

RABELAIS

Tomorrow?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Yes.

RABELAIS

At what hour? At ten perhaps?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

No.

RABELAIS

Can you remember where we are?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Yes.

RABELAIS

Tell me then. Is this the Land of Lanterns yet?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

No.

RABELAIS

But the food and wine are good?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Yes.

RABELAIS

What have they here beside what we have had?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Beef.

RABELAIS

What else?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Eggs.

RABELAIS

How do they like 'em here?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Boiled.

RABELAIS

What fruit do they eat here?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Good.

RABELAIS

How do they eat it?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Raw.

RABELAIS

How do they drink?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Deep.

RABELAIS

What sort of wine?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

White.

RABELAIS

What in Spring, know you?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Brisk.

RABELAIS

What in Summer?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Cool.

RABELAIS

Panurge, thou art bewitched. Talk to me! Come out with something! Tell me when do the Daxies sit up?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Night.

RABELAIS

When do they get up?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Late.

RABELAIS

By the death of a hog, and mother of a toad, O Lord, patience is now necessary. Let us get back to the subject. Are you going to marry or no?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Perhaps.

RABELAIS

Do you think you will be fortunate?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Enough.

RABELAIS

Let it be in the name of God. To lie alone without a wife, is certainly a brutish life. Remember the melancholy state of Didol!

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Sad.

RABELAIS

Wishy, washy, trolly, trolly. Do you hear how I have been advising you? Is it nothing?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Nothing.

RABELAIS

If your wife prove discreet, virtuous, wise and chaste, you shall never wear horns.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

True.

RABELAIS

Why do you doubt of what you shall do?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Because.

RABELAIS

By the belly of the wooden horse of Troy, I could bang, beat, claw and scratch thee. I would resolve another point?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

What?

RABELAIS

Where are we?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Here.

RABELAIS

You need tell me nothing. This wine is restoring me. I remember everything. We are in the goodly kingdom of the Queen of Whims. Last night you ate very much, as did I. And we have slept long hours. It must be late. What time say you is it?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Noon.

RABELAIS

If I had a hundred mouths and tongues, a voice of iron, a heart of oak and lungs of leather, I could not make you speak.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

No.

RABELAIS

No, say you? Tell me where is the Queen? And I would ask you, sirrah, if you have proposed matrimony to her?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

No.

RABELAIS

What think you of her marvelous pulchritude?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Naught.

RABELAIS

That is an excellent lie, Panurge. For I saw you last night ogling her and then tickling her under the chin. Why did you so if you care naught for her?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Wine.

RABELAIS

You were walking about with her exploring what they do in this goodly kingdom. It was then that I lost you, and began to pour much wine, till I fell into sleep. You saw the marvelous activities of this realm, where so many useful things are done which add to the wealth of the world. Did you go where the Queen was teaching cows to dance?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Yes.

RABELAIS

Tell me what were those nets for spread on the lawn? What do they catch therewith?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Wind.

RABELAIS

Did you see them flaying eels by the tail?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Yes.

RABELAIS

Of what were they making milk?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Chalk.

RABELAIS

Did you notice the steeples they were building, and the people that were jumping over them, and can you tell me why the steeples were so built?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

That.

RABELAIS

What was that of which they were manufacturing virtue?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Necessity.

RABELAIS

What were they placing before the horses?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Carts.

RABELAIS

For my own part I saw some measuring how far fleas could go at a hop, step and jump. And there were some at ding-dong, disputing on metaphysics. If they solved them what would be the result anyway?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Gold.

RABELAIS

The wine is clearing my head. It was in the midst of the Queen's discourse, when you were ceasing to dandle and smirk that I fell into sleep, waking this morning on the grass of the courtyard and looking about for thee, thou base varlet! And for the improvement of your intellect shall I bring up from my tenacious memory what the Queen said?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Don't.

RABELAIS

That I shall. Sleep and drowse as you will, fold thy hands in slumber yet. But I shall recount it all. Aberrations of human cogitations through the perplexing labyrinths and abysses of admiration are not the source of folly. 'Tis novelty, newness, strange inventions, fashions, follies, vanities of change. Thus said she. By which she would satirize, by this and her realm here where all strange things are done, and all caprices indulged that she would make all human activity ridiculous. Do you hear me sirrah?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Yes.

RABELAIS

And did you note that when we arrived she was engaged like Penelope with spindles and thread, and that she was blowing out upon the air the fine filaments of cotton, silk, linen and the like, as if to say that everything in human life is of that same texture and nothingness, at the same time laughing at herself and all about her, and meaning to say as I interpret that we are spiders all, weaving webs for flies, and to be caught in our own webs? We are all shooting out threads upon which to crawl to satisfactions and to heavens, and finding the thread much disposed to be wafted down, broken and drifting, and ourselves to fall to earth. Wherefore Panurge I have spoken much of wine, in praise of wine do you hear? And have cooled, soothed, quieted, happified, exalted, rendered impervious to ills of the world my intellects, by the great boon of Bacchus; and have suffered for my devotion to the god all manner of head aches, gripes, malaises, torpors, and what not with no regret. But by Apollo I have never slept as thus you do now. Arise now and let us be on our way to the land of the Dipsodes, crossing many waters to reach the same, and encounter-

ing all manner of wild beasts, as well as necromancers, devils and evil spirits. Come, sirrah!

QUEEN OF WHIMS

No.

RABELAIS

I understand you now. You and the Queen have some lover's pact made, some meeting place appointed, where out of sight of the people and her ministers and officers you may indulge your love. But I will tell you somewhat.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

What?

RABELAIS

She cares nothing for you.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

So?

RABELAIS

Do, Ri, Me, Sol, La, Si, Do. No, nothing. The Queen is in the distemper of love for me. Saw you not her favoritism? She is bewitched about me. And that because this friar's garb hides so gay and ribald a heart, so much wit, and capacity for romance; such lustihood, such curious learning, such contempt of the chowderheads, tom-noddies, hoddy doddies, addle pates, giddy heads, lack-brains, owls, geese, donkeys, dizzle louts, babblers, lunkheads, moon calves, and milksops that make up this earth of crawlers and leapers and runners. The Queen adores me, she needs no philtre. My own marvelous nature, form, discourse in divers tongues; my experience in monkeries, convents; my acquaintance with articles and sacred relics, my familiarity with the learning of the Fathers, with the ancient poets, like Homer and Horace, my own skill at setting down cunning thoughts, and

laugh provoking conceits has bewitched her. And, sirrah, I'll tell you somewhat: she despises you, she laughs behind your back at you; you cannot take her from me. And should I wed her, which I may desert my holy orders to do, so great is love, and the goddess Aphrodite—if I should do so, I will give you leave to stay hereabout as my familiar: you shall never put horns on me. (*He breaks into song*):

What hurt do I to wish you to remark
With favor and compassion how a spark
Of your great beauty hath inflamed my heart
With deep affection, and that for my part,
I only ask that you with me would dance
The brangle gay in feats of dalliance,

For this one time.

(*He changes his key*)

To leap and dance, to sport and play,
And drink good wine both white and brown:
Or nothing else do all the day
But tell bags full of many a crown.

For the last time, Panurge, I say arise.

(*The QUEEN OF WHIMS throws off her coverlet, and dropping her mantle confronts RABELAIS.*)

QUEEN OF WHIMS

So it is such a sponge and carouser as thou that I am in love with?

RABELAIS

Highness—your pardon!

QUEEN OF WHIMS

What book have you there that you do not read?

RABELAIS

The works of Galen and Hippocrates, Highness, and eke Aristotle and the lives of the saints, and the laws of Solon.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

You have drunk up all my wine. You have eaten all my food, you and that rascal Panurge. For shame! And then to tope here and brag that I love thee!

RABELAIS

May I solicit of Your Majesty information concerning my fellow traveler Panurge?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

He is stirring about improving his mind. He is watching out there in my courtyard how the history of hobgoblins is made, and how the shoes of humility are cobbled; and where the mustard pot of penance is mixed; and where they manufacture the bagpipes of prelates; and where phalacteries are widened, and long prayers are prepared, and burdens for others to bear invented, and historical lies concocted, together with how to make the bad the better reason.

RABELAIS

Ah, Highness, what a realm is this of yours! It is no mere foolery, but a place of excellent wisdom, where utopias are seen through, where pious mendicants abound not, where Judge Bridlegoose decides no law cases by dice, where borrowers are honored and usurers scorned, where reality consists in eating and drinking, and orating, preaching, spouting, arguing, moralizing are contemned as amongst the vast lies which make life a lie. Highness, such things as wine and food are the only realities, that and wisdom and nobility of mind, that and honest expounders of high poesy and truth.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

This I shall say for thee, François: thou art not a liar.

RABELAIS

Most excellent and beautiful Majesty thou hast spoken great truth. I am not a liar, but I am an inventor of tales

by which lies are exposed and made laughable, and this human life of ours brought to a proper regard for itself by showing that after all men must eat and drink, and do that with more authentic will and belief than scarce anything else.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

So. Art thou yet an author of a book?

RABELAIS

I am hunting for a place to write one.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Do you contemplate matrimony?

RABELAIS

What, with these evidences of holy orders about me?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Yes, for why all this talk here of marrying or not marrying? Think you that I believe that Panurge is your real thought?

RABELAIS

In good truth, my lady.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

If a man does not know whether to marry or not marry he knows nothing.

RABELAIS

Reflect Your Highness! Consider! Be in no haste to condemn! The confusing therapies of medicine with dried caterpillars for the palsy, the jargon of the furred cats of the law about right and justice, the mysteries of theology are not more perplexing than this question of to marry or not to marry, with all the subtleties involved, together with the intoxications and sorceries in law which come upon a man to disturb his intellects.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Very good! Let it go! Nothing of the kind will be decided

in my realm. So if you would fain keep your fellow Panurge from matrimony, and have a desire to escape it yourself, my realm is the place to stay.

RABELAIS

I am convinced of that, Highness. In truth we two think more of arriving at the oracle of the Holy Bottle than of anything else.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Care you nothing for writing your book?

RABELAIS

Very much Highness.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

I will make a pact with you: you and your fellow may stay here while you write your book. I will furnish wine and food, and rooms, but upon conditions.

RABELAIS

Yes, and those are what?

QUEEN OF WHIMS

That you are to leave my scullery maids and cooks alone.

RABELAIS

Certainly, of a truth. By the bow of Dianal

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Second, that no love court is to be paid me by either of you.

RABELAIS

Your Majesty would have to invite that before it would be gallant and proper.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

On those conditions you may stay here and write your book, until you get ready to resume your pilgrimage to the Holy Bottle. I shall set Panurge at work throwing

houses out of the windows to purge the world of pestilential air. Go to the courtyard and tell him so.

RABELAIS

Yes, Highness.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Then get your quills, paper, sand box, ink, and what else you need. You may have the room called, Do what thou wilt.

RABELAIS

My profound thanks, Your Gracious Majesty.

QUEEN OF WHIMS

Go now, and enter not here again. But keep to your room and your business.

RABELAIS

I shall Highness. (*He turns and goes out singing*):

To leap, to dance, to sport and play,
And drink good wine both white and brown,
Or nothing else do all the day
But tell bags full of many a crown.

THE CURTAIN

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